

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 -21 (Canceled).

22. (Currently Amended) A computer-based corporate rating system, wherein a communication terminal of a corporate rating business entity engaging in a business of performing corporate ratings having said communication terminal, a communication terminal of one or a plurality of target enterprises each having said communication terminal and each having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity and desiring a corporate rating of itself, a communication terminal of an accounting firm having said communication terminal and having a prescribed contractual relationship with an application service provider (ASP) and each one of said plurality of target enterprises, an ASP server of said ASP having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity, said each one of said target enterprises, and said accounting firm, are mutually electrically connected via an appropriate communication circuit,

wherein said ASP comprises storage means for storing business information indicating general business activities of each one of said target enterprises, including at least financial, accounting, and tax information for each one of said target enterprises, separately, into one of a plurality of specific areas of said storage means provided in said ASP and respectively allocated to each one of said target enterprises, ~~separately,~~

and further wherein said system comprises functions, each being performed by a respective computer that executes computer-readable program code stored on computer-readable medium, of:

~~a first function of said terminal of each one of said target enterprises minimally~~
periodically transmitting, by said terminal of each of said target enterprises to said ASP via
said communication circuit, said business information for his own said respective target
enterprise, in response to a specific operation signal issued from said respective target
enterprise, so that said business information provided to said ASP is current business
information;

~~a second function of~~ determining, by said ASP server in response to said transmission
of said business information, ~~determining~~ whether or not said target enterprise ~~who~~ which

sent ~~his~~ said business information to said ASP ~~[[,]]~~ has a specific contract with said ASP, and when said target enterprise has the specific contract with said ASP ~~has been confirmed~~, allowing said target enterprise to store said business information of said target enterprise in one of the specific areas of said storage means of said ASP, ~~and~~ which is allocated for said target enterprise;

~~a third function of said ASP server in response to said transmitting signals from said target enterprise, reiterating to perform said first step and said second step at an appropriate interval, so as to maintain said stored business information in said storage means of said ASP at all times in an updated condition with said latest business information with regard to each said target enterprise;~~

~~a fourth function of~~ determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said target enterprise to said ASP to review or download said ~~his~~ business information stored in said specific area allocated for ~~him~~ said target enterprise in said storage means provided in said ASP, ~~determining~~ whether or not said target enterprise ~~who~~ which sent said access request signal to said ASP has a specific contract with said ASP, and when said target enterprise has the specific contract with said ASP ~~has been confirmed~~, allowing said target enterprise to access ~~to~~ said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said target enterprise so that said target enterprise can perform an operation for viewing or downloading, from said ASP via ~~its own~~ said communication terminal of said target enterprise, said business information ~~with regard to its own~~ of said target enterprise;

~~a fifth function of~~ determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to access the business information of a specific target enterprise stored in one of said specific ~~area~~ areas of said storage means provided in said ASP and allocated to said specific target enterprise, ~~determining~~ whether or not said accounting firm ~~who~~ which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise ~~have been confirmed~~, allowing said accounting firm to access to said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said accounting firm can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said storage means of said ASP, via ~~its own~~ said communication terminal of said accounting firm, said business

information with regard to said target enterprise and thereby said accounting firm can evaluate closing account details of ~~closing account~~ of said specific target enterprise and issue an electronic signature certifying the accuracy and appropriateness of said closing account details of ~~closing account~~ of said specific target enterprise;

~~a sixth function of determining, by~~ said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to store said a electronic signature ~~certified that certifies said~~ closing account details of said target enterprise in said storage means of said ASP, ~~determining~~ whether or not said accounting firm ~~who~~ which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise have been confirmed, allowing said accounting firm to access to said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said electronic signature ~~certified that certifies said~~ closing account details of said specific target enterprise formed by said accounting firm is stored therein;

~~a seventh function of determining, by~~ said ASP server in response to an access request signal from said corporate rating business entity to said ASP to access to said business information of ~~[[a]]~~ said specific target enterprise stored in said storage means of said ASP when said corporate rating business entity ~~was~~ has been requested from a target enterprise ~~who~~ which desires to obtain a corporate rating thereof, ~~determining~~ whether or not said corporate rating business entity ~~who~~ which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said corporate rating business entity has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise have been confirmed, allowing said corporate rating business entity to access to said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise, so that said corporate rating business entity can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said ASP, via ~~its own~~ said communication terminal of said corporate rating business entity, said business information with regard to said specific target enterprise, and thereby said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise is completed using a corporate rating software in said corporate rating business entity; and

~~an eighth function of allowing, by~~ said terminal of said corporate rating business entity, ~~allowing~~ said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise formed by corporate

rating business entity to be disclosed to said target enterprise that output the access request signal via said communication circuit.

23. (Currently Amended) A corporate rating system according to claim 22, wherein said corporate rating business entity refers said electronic signature certified closing account issued for the target enterprise and stored in said storage means of said ASP in said ~~seventh~~ allowing function, and wherein said business information provided to said ASP by said target enterprise includes non-publically-available information of said target enterprise.

24. (Previously Presented) A corporate rating system according to claim 22, wherein said communication circuit is an Internet.

25. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented corporate rating method, wherein a communication terminal of a corporate rating business entity engaging in a business of performing corporate ratings having said communication terminal, a communication terminal of one or a plurality of target enterprises each having said communication terminal and each having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity and desiring a corporate rating of itself, a communication terminal of an accounting firm having said communication terminal and having a prescribed contractual relationship with said application service provider (ASP) and each one of said plurality of target enterprises, an ASP server of said ASP having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity, each one of said target enterprises, and said accounting firm, are mutually electrically connected via an appropriate communication circuit,

wherein said ASP comprises storage means for storing business information indicating general business activities of each one of said target enterprises, including at least financial, accounting, and tax information for each one of said target enterprises, into one of a plurality of specific areas of said storage means provided in said ASP and respectively allocated to each one of said target enterprises, ~~separately,~~

and further wherein the method comprising the steps of:

~~a first step of said terminal of each one of said target enterprises minimally~~ periodically transmitting, by said terminal of each of said target enterprises to said ASP via said communication circuit, said business information for ~~his own~~ said respective target

enterprise, in response to a specific operation signal issued from said respective target enterprise, so that said business information stored provided to said ASP is current business information;

~~a second step of determining, by~~ said ASP server in response to said transmission of said business information, ~~determining~~ whether or not said target enterprise ~~who~~ which sent ~~his~~ said business information to said ASP ~~[[,]]~~ has a specific contract with said ASP, and when said target enterprise has the specific contract with said ASP ~~has been confirmed~~, allowing said target enterprise to store said business information of said target enterprise in one of the specific areas of said storage means of said ASP, ~~and~~ which is allocated for said target enterprise;

~~a third step of said ASP server in response to said transmitting signals from said target enterprise, reiterating to perform said first step and said second step at an appropriate interval, so as to maintain said stored business information in said storage means of said ASP at all times in an updated condition with said latest business information with regard to each said target enterprise;~~

~~a fourth step of determining, by~~ said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said target enterprise to said ASP to review or download said ~~his~~ business information stored in said specific area allocated for ~~him~~ said target enterprise in said storage means provided in said ASP, ~~determining~~ whether or not said target enterprise ~~who~~ which sent said access request signal to said ASP has a specific contract with said ASP, and when said target enterprise has the specific contract with said ASP ~~has been confirmed~~, allowing said target enterprise to access ~~to~~ said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said target enterprise so that said target enterprise can perform an operation for viewing or downloading, from said ASP via ~~its own~~ said communication terminal of said target enterprise, said business information ~~with regard to its own~~ of said target enterprise;

~~a fifth step of determining, by~~ said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to access the business information of a specific target enterprise stored in one of said specific area areas of said storage means provided in said ASP and allocated to said specific target enterprise, ~~determining~~ whether or not said accounting firm ~~who~~ which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has

the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise have been confirmed, allowing said accounting firm to access to said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said accounting firm can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said storage means of said ASP, via ~~its own~~ said communication terminal of said accounting firm, said business information with regard to said target enterprise and thereby said accounting firm can evaluate closing account details of closing account of said specific target enterprise and issue an electronic signature certifying the accuracy and appropriateness of said closing account details of closing account of said specific target enterprise;

~~a sixth step of determining, by~~ said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to store said a electronic signature certified that certifies said closing account details of said target enterprise in said storage means of said ASP, ~~determining~~ whether or not said accounting firm ~~who~~ which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise have been confirmed, allowing said accounting firm to access to said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said electronic signature ~~certified that~~ certifies said closing account details of said specific target enterprise formed by said accounting firm is stored therein;

~~a seventh step of determining, by~~ said ASP server in response to an access request signal from said corporate rating business entity to said ASP to access to said business information of [[a]] said specific target enterprise stored in said storage means of said ASP when said corporate rating business entity ~~was~~ has been requested from a target enterprise ~~who~~ which desires to obtain a corporate rating thereof, ~~determining~~ whether or not said corporate rating business entity ~~who~~ which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said corporate rating business entity has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise have been confirmed, allowing said corporate rating business entity to access to said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise, so that said corporate rating business entity can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said ASP, via ~~its own~~ said communication terminal of said corporate rating business entity, said business information with regard to said specific target

enterprise, and thereby said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise is completed using a corporate rating software in said corporate rating business entity; and

~~an eighth step of allowing, by~~ said terminal of said corporate rating business entity, ~~allowing~~ said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise formed by corporate rating business entity to be disclosed to said target enterprise that output the access request signal via said communication circuit.

26. (Currently Amended) A corporate rating method according to claim 25, wherein said corporate rating business entity refers said electronic signature certified closing account issued for the target enterprise and stored in said storage means of said ASP, in said ~~seventh~~ fifth determining step, and wherein said business information provided to said ASP by said target enterprise includes non-publically-available information of said target enterprise.

27. (Currently Amended) A corporate rating method according to claim 25, wherein said communication circuit is an Internet.

28. (Currently Amended) A computer-based corporate rating system, wherein a communication terminal of a corporate rating business entity engaging in a business of performing corporate ratings having said communication terminal, a communication terminal of one or a plurality of target enterprises each having said communication terminal and each having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity and desiring a corporate rating of itself, a communication terminal of an accounting firm having said communication terminal and having a prescribed contractual relationship with an application service provider (ASP) and each one of said plurality of target enterprises, an ASP server of said ASP having a prescribed contractual relationship with said corporate rating business entity, said each one of said target enterprises, and said accounting firm, are mutually electrically connected via an appropriate communication circuit,

wherein said ASP comprises a storage unit configured to store business information indicating general business activities of each one of said target enterprises, including at least financial, accounting, and tax information for each one of said target enterprises, separately, into one of a plurality of specific areas of said storage unit provided in said ASP and respectively allocated to each one of said target enterprises, ~~separately,~~

and further wherein said system comprises functions, each being performed by a respective computer that executes computer-readable program code stored on computer-readable medium, of:

~~a first function of said terminal of each one of said target enterprises minimally~~
periodically transmitting, by said terminal of each of said target enterprises to said ASP via
said communication circuit, said business information for his own said respective target
enterprise, in response to a specific operation signal issued from said respective target
enterprise, so that said business information stored provided to said ASP is current business
information;

~~a second function of determining, by said ASP server in response to said transmission~~
of said business information, ~~determining~~ whether or not said target enterprise ~~who~~ which
sent ~~his~~ said business information to said ASP ~~[[,]]~~ has a specific contract with said ASP,
and when said target enterprise has the specific contract with said ASP has been confirmed,
allowing said target enterprise to store said business information of said target enterprise in
one of the specific areas of said storage means of said ASP, ~~and~~ which is allocated for said
target enterprise;

~~a third function of said ASP server in response to said transmitting signals from said~~
~~target enterprise, reiterating to perform said first step and said second step at an appropriate~~
~~interval, so as to maintain said stored business information in said storage means of said ASP~~
~~at all times in an updated condition with said latest business information with regard to each~~
~~said target enterprise;~~

~~a fourth function of determining, by said ASP server in response to an access request~~
signal output from said target enterprise to said ASP to review or download said ~~his~~ business
information stored in said specific area allocated for ~~him~~ said target enterprise in said storage
means provided in said ASP, ~~determining~~ whether or not said target enterprise ~~who~~ which
sent said access request signal to said ASP has a specific contract with said ASP, and when
said target enterprise has the specific contract with said ASP has been confirmed, allowing
said target enterprise to access ~~to~~ said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and
which is allocated for said target enterprise so that said target enterprise can perform an
operation for viewing or downloading, from said ASP via ~~its own~~ said communication
terminal of said target enterprise, said business information ~~with regard to its own~~ of said
target enterprise;

~~a fifth function of determining, by~~ said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to access the business information of a specific target enterprise stored in one of said specific ~~area~~ areas of said storage means provided in said ASP and allocated to said specific target enterprise, ~~determining~~ whether or not said accounting firm ~~who~~ which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise have been confirmed, allowing said accounting firm to access to said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said accounting firm can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said storage means of said ASP, via its ~~own~~ said communication terminal of said accounting firm, said business information with regard to said target enterprise and thereby said accounting firm can evaluate closing account details of ~~closing account~~ of said specific target enterprise and issue an electronic signature certifying the accuracy and appropriateness of said closing account details of ~~closing account~~ of said specific target enterprise;

~~a sixth function of determining, by~~ said ASP server in response to an access request signal output from said accounting firm to said ASP to store ~~said a~~ an electronic signature ~~certified that certifies said~~ certified that certifies said closing account details of said target enterprise in said storage means of said ASP, ~~determining~~ whether or not said accounting firm ~~who~~ which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said accounting firm has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise have been confirmed, allowing said accounting firm to access to said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise so that said electronic signature ~~certified that certifies said~~ certified that certifies said closing account details of said specific target enterprise formed by said accounting firm is stored therein;

~~a seventh function of determining, by~~ said ASP server in response to an access request signal from said corporate rating business entity to said ASP to access ~~to~~ said business information of [[a]] said specific target enterprise stored in said storage means of said ASP when said corporate rating business entity ~~was~~ has been requested from a target enterprise ~~who~~ which desires to obtain a corporate rating thereof, ~~determining~~ whether or not said corporate rating business entity ~~who~~ which sent said access request signal to said ASP has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise, and when said corporate

rating business entity has the specific contracts with said ASP and said specific target enterprise have been confirmed, allowing said corporate rating business entity to access to said specific area in said storage means of said ASP and which is allocated for said specific target enterprise, so that said corporate rating business entity can perform an operation for viewing or downloading from said ASP, via ~~its own~~ said communication terminal of said corporate rating business entity, said business information with regard to said specific target enterprise, and thereby said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise is completed using a corporate rating software in said corporate rating business entity; and

~~an eighth function of allowing, by~~ said terminal of said corporate rating business entity, ~~allowing~~ said corporate rating for said specific target enterprise formed by corporate rating business entity to be disclosed to said target enterprise that output the access request signal via said communication circuit.

29. (Currently Amended) A corporate rating system according to claim 28, wherein said corporate rating business entity refers said electronic signature certified closing account issued for the target enterprise and stored in said storage unit of said ASP in said seventh allowing function, and wherein said business information provided to said ASP by said target enterprise includes non-publically-available information of said target enterprise.

30. (Previously Presented) A corporate rating system according to claim 28, wherein said communication circuit is an Internet.